Minutes of the sixth
meeting of the Commission of
Fine Arts, held February
15, 1911.

MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS,

Held February fifteenth, 1911.

-0-

The sixth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts, called by the Chairman, was held in its office in the Lemon Building, Washington, D. C., on Wednesday, February 15, 1911. The following members were present:

Mr. Burnham, the Chairman;

Mr. Olmsted;

Mr. French;

Mr. Millet;

Mr. Moore; also

Colonel Spencer Cosby, the Secretary and Executive Officer.

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 11:00 A. M., and immediately proceeded to the business before it.

1. The minutes of the preceding meeting, held Friday, January 13, 1911, were presented and approved.

2. Upon inquiry made by the Officer in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds, as to the opinion of the Commission, it was decided that there is no objection to having the name of the architect, as well as that of the sculptor, appear on the pedestal of monuments.

3. The Secretary called the attention of the Commission to the condition of the Park Commission plans, drawings and photographs, which were turned over to the Commission of Fine Arts by the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the

District of Columbia. The Secretary was directed to take the necessary steps to have the plans repaired and put in good condition before they are again loaned to any one; he was also requested to ascertain whether Mr. Glenn Brown will be willing to supervise the hanging of the plans whenever they are sent out for exhibition hereafter, his expenses to be paid by the party requesting their loan. The Secretary was also instructed, in consultation with the Chairman, to formulate a plan for the proper packing, insuring and safeguarding of the plans whenever they leave the custody of the Commission.

4. The Secretary read the Act of Congress creating the Lincoln Memorial Commission, which was discussed at some length, but no action was taken as the matter has not yet been referred to the Commission of Fine Arts.

5. The Secretary read the letter from the Senate Committee on the Library requesting that the Commission report as to the artistic merit, historical value and money value of a portrait of Abraham Lincoln (painted by G. W. F. Travis), and as to the desirability of its purchase by the Government. Mr. J. Boardman Scovell of Buffalo, New York, representing Col. M. H. Alberger, the owner of the portrait, appeared before the Commission and urged favorable action. As the portrait could not be taken from its position in the Caucus Room of the Senate Office Building on account of its large size, final action was deferred until after an examination of it had been made later in the day, when a letter, containing the report of the Commission, was sent to Senator Wetmore, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Library. (For copy of letter see Exhibit A.)

6. Messrs. D. H. Burnham and Company, Chicago, Illinois, presented to the Commission the plans for the new Post-Office Building to be erected adjacent to the Union Station in Washington, D. C. After an inspection of these plans, upon motion duly made and seconded, they were unanimously approved.

7. A letter from S. J. Hathaway, Marietta, Ohio, transmitting a monograph on the proposed Lincoln Memorial, was brought to the attention of the Commission, and a letter, prepared by the Secretary in reply, was read and approved.

8. Justice Van Orsdel, Mr. F. W. Collins, and Hon. C. D. Hilles, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, representing the Alexander Hamilton Memorial Association, appeared before the Commission and requested its advice in regard to the site for the proposed statue of Alexander Hamilton. They explained the desire of the Association to erect the statue, if possible, in the vicinity of the Treasury Department, and described two sites that had been suggested. After a discussion of the subject, upon motion duly made and seconded, it was

> "RESOLVED, That the Commission approves, as the site for the proposed statue of Alexander Hamilton, the location upon the platform on the south front and on the north and south axis of the Treasury Building. The exact place upon the axis should be determined after most careful consideration.
>
> The Commission suggests that, before deciding definitely upon the size of the monument, a temporary enlargement of the accepted model in plaster should be erected on the selected site in order to determine the proper scale and composition."

The Secretary was directed to transmit a copy of these resolutions to Mr. Hilles, the Secretary of the Alexander Hamilton Statue Commission.

9. The Secretary presented the formal request of the John Paul Jones Statue Commission that the Commission of Fine Arts make an examination of the full-size model of the John Paul Jones Statue, and report as to its acceptance by the Government. Messrs. Cass Gilbert and Daniel C. French were appointed a Committee by the Chair to inspect the model, with power to report to the John Paul Jones Statue Commission the result of their inspection. The Secretary was directed by the Chair to accompany the Committee upon this inspection.

10. The Secretary read a protest from the Colonial Dames of America in the State

of Illinois in regard to the proposed location of a reformatory in the vicinity of Mount Vernon. The Secretary was directed to acknowledge receipt of it and to state that, should the matter of the reformatory site again be presented to the Commission, the protest would be given full consideration.

11. The Committee ( Messrs. Burnham, Millet and Gilbert ) appointed by the Chair to hold a hearing on January 14th in regard to the proposed location of a reformatory near Mount Vernon, submitted the following report:

> "The Committee appointed by the Chair to hold a hearing and report to the President upon the question of the location of a reformatory on the Belvoir tract in Virginia, below Mount Vernon, met the District Commissioners, the representatives of the Regents of Mount Vernon, and others, at 10:30 A. M., Saturday, January 14, 1911, in the Office of the Commission. After having been heard fully in the matter, the visitors left, and the Committee proceeded to a discussion of the various phases of the question submitted by the President, and decided upon the nature of its report. A letter embodying its decision was drawn up later and sent to the President."

Upon motion duly made and seconded the report of the Committee was adopted and the Committee discharged.

12. The Committee ( Messrs. Millet, French, and Gilbert ) appointed by the Chair to examine the model, and consult with the designers, of the McMillan Memorial Fountain, submitted the following report:

> "The Committee appointed to meet the designers of the McMillan Memorial Fountain have the honor to report that, in accordance with instructions, a conference was held with the designers of the Memorial in New York City on January 21, 1911, with the result that, at the request of the Committee, the designers submitted for the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts a drawing showing the proposed planting around the Memorial".

Upon motion duly made and seconded the report of the Committee was adopted and the Committee discharged.

Upon motion duly made and seconded the Commission unanimously approved the general plan of the proposed planting around the fountain, as indicated by the drawing submitted by the designers, and the plans for the fountain.

13. The design of the Valley Forge Memorial Arch, submitted by the Secretary of War to the Commission for an expression of its views, was carefully considered. The Commission approved the design of the arch, but doubts were expressed as to its suitability for the site selected. The Chair appointed a Committee, consisting of Messrs. Olmsted, Millet and Burnham, with full power to report to the Secretary of War, to decide upon this question, and, Mr. Burnham and Mr. Millet having previously visited Valley Forge Park together, Mr. Olmsted was directed to proceed to and examine the site proposed for the arch and report thereon to the Committee.

14. The final plans for the new building to house the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which were submitted to the Commission by Assistant Secretary Hilles of the Treasury Department, were carefully considered and a letter, containing its comments and suggestions, was forwarded to him. (For copy of letter see Exhibit B).

15. The Commission carefully examined the preliminary plans for a Normal School Building, and the plans for an Engine House and a Manual Training School, submitted by the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia; after discussion, a letter containing the comments and suggestions of the Commission was forwarded to the Commissioners . (For copy of letter see Exhibit C.)

16. The plans for the Naval Battalion (National Guard of the District of Columbia) storehouse, submitted by Brigadier-General Geo. H. Harries, were carefully examined and a letter containing the comments of the Commission was forwarded to him. (For copy of letter see Exhibit D.)

17. Mr. F. D. Millet submitted for the opinion of the Commission a set of photographs of paintings for the new Federal Building (Post-Office) in Cleveland, Ohio; upon motion duly made and seconded they were unanimously approved.

18. The Commission then left the Office and, after a short interval for lunch, proceeded to the Caucus Room of the Senate Office Building and inspected the portrait of Abraham Lincoln; later it proceeded to the studio of Mr. F. D. Millet, and inspected the paintings for the new Federal building in Cleveland, Ohio.

19. Upon their return to the Office the members decided that meetings of the Commission shall be held hereafter on the third Friday in each month unless some special reason exists for changing the date and that the time of meeting shall be changed from 11 A. M., to 10 A.M. At 6:45 P. M., the Commission adjourned to meet at 10 A. M., Friday, March 17, unless otherwise notified by the Chairman.

Approved:

Chairman.

Secretary.

EXHIBIT 4

February 15, 1911.

Hon. Geo. Peabody Wetmore,
Chairman, Senate Committee on Library,
United States Senate.

Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts having been asked by the Senate Committee on the Library to report as to the artistic merit, historical value and money value of a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, proposed to be purchased by Senate Bill No. 2765, 61st Congress, respectfully report that in their opinion the portrait has not sufficient artistic merit or historical value to warrant its purchase at a price exceeding fifteen hundred dollars. The members of the Commission are familiar with most of the painted portraits, busts and statues of Lincoln, and also with the life mask which is the authoritative document of the features. While they question the accuracy of the portraiture in the painting in question, they recognize that a certain sentimental value may be attached to it from the fact that the artist had one or more sittings from life. At the same time the historical value of the portrait is not greatly enhanced by this fact because the artist was not sufficiently master of his profession to record the eminent characteristics of the sitter's personality.

Yours very truly,

D. H. BURNHAM,

Chairman.

EXHIBIT. B

February 15, 1911.

Hon. C. D. Hilles,

Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts acknowledges receipt of your report of February first on the modifications of the plans of the building for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

The modified design for the building is highly satisfactory, and the Commission congratulates the Treasury Department both on the type of architecture selected and also on the dignified and even noble manner in which the design has been carried out. The result should be gratifying in a very high degree.

The Commission submits some suggestions as to certain matters, which, although subordinate to the general plan, are nevertheless very important in producing to the fullest degree the effects intended.

Can the vault in the north rear court be moved a few feet to the south in order to make it center exactly on C street?

Are the five door architraves in the center of the south elevation of the Roman Doric order? If not, should they not be changed?

Would not wider steps for the main outside entrance add grace and dignity to the building? Those shown seem too narrow.

Considering the use of the Roman Doric style, the lions used at the entrance should be the severe Syrian type, similar to those on the Termini fountain in Rome, and used in numerous other instances; the naturalistic type should not be used.

The Commission adheres to its original suggestion that the rear facing in the courts be of granite. If the amount of money available renders this seemingly impossible, a careful estimate should be made of the increased expense (which would not be large) and it is suggested that an additional appropriation be asked for to cover this specific item. We feel that Government work should set a standard of excellence and especially of thoroughness; moreover, any cheapening of one face of a building is certain, sooner or later, to be regretted. A striking instance is seen in the east front of the Treasury Department building from which the Government has recently, at great expense, removed the original sandstone columns to replace them with columns of granite; other instances might easily be adduced. While it is now impossible to say what use will be made of the grounds east of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, such use will undoubtedly be a dignified one. If this rear frontage be made of granite, we suggest that the main cornice be carried through and that the tower-like treatment of the main building in the center court be restudied to bring it to a more dignified aspect.

Very respectfully,

D. H. BURNHAM,

Chairman.

EXHIBIT C

February 15, 1911.

Hon. Cuno H. Rudolph,
President, Board of Commissioners,
of the District of Columbia,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts acknowledges the receipt of the blueprints of the plans of the following buildings:

A Normal School;
An Engine House;
A Manual Training School.

The Normal School is an important structure. The need for a large amount of light is recognized in your letter, but seems not to be fully met in the plans presented. Several of the rooms have outside windows of an area much less than the specified one-fifth of the floor space, and appear to depend largely on borrowed light. Moreover, the outside windows are generally arranged in groups, three windows wide, in such a manner as to give a less effective distribution of light than could be secured from separated windows of the same area. As the grouping of windows is a characteristic feature of the style of architecture selected, and as the scale of the individual window openings shown in the drawing is already larger than is characteristic of this style, it would seem important either to select a different style or to use grouped windows consisting of a larger number of units and giving a greater area of glass. Large mullioned windows are frequently found in Elizabethan building, but the individual openings and the mullions which separate them were never on so large a scale as is suggested in these drawings. In other respects also the elevation submitted, even though regarded as a mere preliminary sketch, suggests a lack of mastery of the details upon which the charm of this style largely depends. Also the staircases seem narrow, and we question whether the corridors are of sufficient width for the accomodation of the occupants of the building.

The designer of the Engine House has knowledge of the details of the style used and has made a presentable front to his building.

The exterior of the Manual Training School is straightforward and good, and the result should be satisfactory provided the details are properly drawn. The plan appears satisfactory, but we do not understand how it is intended to design the cornice and roof over the narrow wall returned on the parking, which forms an angle with the main park wall.

In the opinion of the Commission the general aspect of the District of Columbia would be improved if some uniform style of school architecture could be adopted and adhered to, and the same may be said in respect to engine houses and other public buildings. The adoption of a style for each class of public buildings would not in any way prevent originality in adapting a specific building to its particular needs; and, in Washington where the

architecture is of so heterogeneous a nature, similarity in public buildings would add much to the impressiveness of the city. We urge that immediate attention be given to this subject with the view of adopting certain styles of architecture which would be harmonious among themselves and would also be adapted to the particular purposes in view.

By direction of the Commission:

Very respectfully,

SPENCER COSBY,

Colonel, U. S. Army,

Secretary and Executive Officer.

ABC

EXHIBIT D

February 15, 1911.

Gen. George H. Harries,
Brigadier-General, Commanding
District of Columbia Militia,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts acknowledges the reference of the plans for a storehouse of the Naval Battalion of the Militia of the District of Columbia for the comments of the Commission.

The plan, materials and scale of ornamentation are satisfactory, but the tablet, containing the name, is a disturbing feature of the design and should be omitted. The Commission suggests, however, that the style of architecture should conform to that originally used for storehouses at the old Washington Arsenal, and adopted by the architects of the War College. The precedent thus established should be followed in all military storehouses in the District of Columbia.

Very respectfully,

D. H. BURNHAM,

Chairman.